

How To Abandon Self View

(from Hillside Hermitage talk no.287)

Ajahn Nyanamoli: What is the result of a successful practice?

Q: Not being bothered as much.

Nm: In that case, what can happen is that when people get inspired to practice, they end up constructing an environment around them whereby nothing bothers them; where everything is at arm's length; and it feels like their practice is succeeding because they don't suffer as much factually. They end up measuring their success by how much better they can manage their suffering. Which, suffice to say, is quite unfortunate.

How would you know that you are practicing correctly? How is not being bothered practically measured in terms of the insight talked about in the suttas?

Q: What about if your mind moves less on account of the thought of dying?

Nm: What do the suttas define as the culminating insight required for a mind to not move on account of dying?

Q: Anicca.

Nm: What's the insight that anicca and dukkha culminate in?

Q: Anatta.

Nm: Exactly, that is the culminating insight. The complete cessation, first of self-view, then of conceit. And when that is completely gone without any trace- you couldn't suffer even if you want to.

Q: Is the measure that the less somebody takes things personally, the more they are progressing in the practice?

Nm: It could be. But you also have psycho-therapeutical methods that teach you how 'not to take things personally'. But you're taking *that* personally. So, it has to be an actual insight into anatta. And anatta is not something you can stumble upon accidentally. That's why you need the voice of another and *yoniso manasikara* (concurrent attention) based on sense restraint. It's a factual, irreversible insight. Seeing anicca and dukkha is just so that you can experience the anatta.

"There are monks, these two conditions for the arising of the right view.

Which are the two? The voice of another, and yoniso manasikara.

These, monks, are the two conditions for the arising of the right view." - [An2.118-129](#)

Q: You can say my mind won't be bothered by even the thought of dying. But anatta is more fundamental than becoming so mentally strong that nothing bothers you.

Nm: Yes. That's a necessary prerequisite for insight. As the Buddha said during his life, some teachers could help one establish neither-perception-nor-non-perception, which means you are pretty much unbothered by anything inferior to that. But only in the dispensation of the Buddha could one attain the anatta part.

The suttas say that an Arahant's mind doesn't get overwhelmed by things- an Arahant's mind overwhelms things. That is the factual strength, without which one couldn't understand and fully develop the anatta.

"When a bhikkhu dwells thus, (restraint, recollected, wise, and liberated), he overwhelms forms; forms do not overwhelm him. He overwhelms sounds; sounds do not overwhelm him. He overwhelms odors; odors do not overwhelm him. He overwhelms tastes; tastes do not overwhelm him. He overwhelms tactile objects; tactile objects do not overwhelm him. He overwhelms mental phenomena; mental phenomena do not overwhelm him. This is called a bhikkhu who overwhelms forms, who overwhelms sounds, who overwhelms odors, who overwhelms tastes, who overwhelms tactile objects, who overwhelms mental phenomena—one who overwhelms and who is not overwhelmed. He has overwhelmed those evil unwholesome states that defile, that lead to being, that bring trouble, that result in suffering, and that perpetuate birth, aging, and death.

"It is in this way that one is uncorrupted." - [Sn35.243](#)

But say you have been sense restrained, seeing the danger in the slightest fault, guarding the sense doors, keeping the precepts, living in solitude. If you are meeting the requirements to start seeing and abandoning attavada(self-view),... what then is self-view? Is it something that would occur, and you can interpret it in hindsight? Or do you need to know where to look for it, to see it and recognize it? What's the necessary basis for anatta?

Q: Seeing atta (self).

Nm: Yes. What is atta then?

Q: You can't put it in front of you- it's always peripheral.

Nm: Yes, the properties of atta- the sense of self- are that it's not directly visible. You can't access it through your senses. You can't observe it with your five senses, and you can't say 'this is my "Self" that I am relating to'. It's always ambiguous. What else? Do you have the experience of when that self is not there?

Q: No.

Nm: It's always there to some degree. Sometimes it might feel clearer or more ambiguous. But that sense of self -the center of experience- is always there. Do you see it right now as we speak- the sense of self enduring on its own- somehow ambiguously lingering?

Q: To some degree. Accepting its allusivity is important when it comes to seeing it on its own terms.

Nm: That's the key there. The way to see it is on its own terms. That is what solitude and the practice of mindfulness are. Not how to make it into an object of observation that I think it should be.

The Present Memory

Mindfulness is the memory of your present experience. By abandoning the views of mindfulness being concentration on the present moment you realize that there's nothing complicated about it. Having the memory of the present moment while we speak- that's what mindfulness is. The practice of memory here and now.

It's like a different angle of attending to what is directly attended in front of me- yoniso manasikara. If I ask you to recall a memory, how would you do that? Focus on sensations and your breathing? No, it would be the opposite. You would de-focus on what you were focusing on, to recall or recollect what is there.

That point of view- of memory- whether it's the memory of this second or the memory of 10 years ago, is the same point of view. It's the point of view that you can use to observe the present experience; at the same time, you are (indirectly) in the present experience. It's the background of your current absorbed attention. It's the 'point of view' of your senses. It's where the mind is.

That ambiguous ‘sense of self’ is neither here (in the senses) nor there (in the sense objects); it’s in between the two.

If you’re of the view that that sense of self is something you can think directly, or that it’s something you can access through your senses directly, or that it’s something you can observe and see as ‘anatta’; you are not seeing anatta. You are just chasing the idea that you have intellectually developed- on account of reading the suttas or listening to talks. The sense of self is always behind from where you are looking. When you realize that the range of where you can look is either the direction of where you attend or the direction of the memory point of view; you realize that you don’t need to know specifically where the sense of self is. You know that it will have to be between the two points of view- that are there at the same time running concurrently.

“With this, this is”. It’s not that the memory point of view (where the mind is) comes first, in the sense that it exists apart from the senses. No, they exist simultaneously. One is the way of direct attention, and the other is the knowledge of direct attention (yoniso manasikara). That’s why sati and memory are used interchangeably in the suttas. The problem is that when one hears the word ‘memory’ one can have the view of the past. But, even if it’s the past, it’s presently recollected. Then you realize that you could practice, instead of only recollecting the past; recollect what is presently enduring. Not allowing myself to directly attend to it but knowing it on the level of memory.

Are you seated now? Yes. That’s a present memory. You don’t need to feel your knees. The recognition of that simultaneously enduring point of view is there. It’s two points of observance of the same thing. Because they are *two* points of view (not one), neither can be in charge or master of the experience. With this, this is. Without this, this wouldn’t be. Either way, there’s no room for ownership.

Let’s say you start practicing sati correctly in solitude. You are recollecting what you are presently doing instead of being absorbed into attending to what you are presently doing. Keeping that peripheral point of view. Watching what is present- sitting, breathing, etc... The memory of current breathing is what anapanasati is. It’s not the accessing of it through directly attending the sensations of it, but accessing it through the indirect knowledge (point of view) of it. The recognition of the images of breathing that you are doing. That’s what memory is.

“Sati, in a loose sense, can certainly be translated as “memory” but memory is normally memory of the past, whereas in the eight-factored path sati is more particularly concerned with the present. In so far as one can speak of memory of the present, this translation will do, but memory of the present—i.e. calling to mind the present—is less confusingly translated as “mindfulness.” Here are two Sutta passages illustrating these two meanings of sati: in the first passage sati is “memory,” and in the second it is “mindfulness.” The passages can be translated as follows:

(i) The noble disciple is mindful, he is endowed with the highest mindfulness (memory) and prudence, he remembers and recalls what was done and what was said long ago. (SN 48:50/S V 275)

(ii) Here, monks, a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body... feelings in feelings... the mind in the mind... ideas in ideas, ardent, aware, mindful, having put away worldly covetousness and grief. Thus, monks, is a monk mindful. (SN 36:7/S IV 211)”
[*- chapter 17, Selected Letters of Nāṇavīra Thera*](#)

The atta (sense of self)- however ambiguous, fleeting, or unclear it might be- it’s real as such. Instead of you trying to ‘see myself on the level of directly attended experience’, you see it for whatever it is- however it is: A thick cloud; sometimes palpable; sometimes not... But the sense of self, the sense of ‘I am’ is there, lingering. In other words, you can’t go behind it. You can’t become the observer of it and turn it into an object. It’s always in the background.

How do you make it not perpetually escape you?

Q: It will always be allusive.

Nm: Everybody can recognize its ambiguity, but then they feel a pressure, impulse, or tendency to try and clarify it. They think that the only way they can relate to it is if it is more defined. But it's not. It's an ambiguous phenomenon. It's neither here nor there, but it is real as such. That's why you shouldn't dismiss it, redefine it, or mystify it; it's a real phenomenon like any other thing. If you try to directly access it, it's always going to slip through your fingers.

So first you realize that you cannot make it *not* allusive. It's going to stay allusive. You need to accept the ambiguity of it, as its characteristic. That's enough for you to recognize it as being there.

How do you access it without grabbing it?

Q: By recollecting it.

Nm: By surmounting it in the sense that we just described. There is an ambiguous thing that's neither in my senses nor away from it. It's kind of always there. But wherever it is, it *must* be in between this and this: What I am directly attending, and the knowledge of what I am directly attending. It cannot be outside of these two directions. Recollect that frequently and in solitude- based on your currently enduring sense of self (not just theoretically). This sense of self that you're not trying to define, or ignore, has to be in between 'this and this' (the two simultaneous points of view).

Becoming established in that idea is how you uproot the sense of self. You don't uproot it immediately. You uproot the view that the sense of self can be outside 'this, and this'; outside of the experience as a whole; outside of the five aggregates- whichever way you want to define it.

If I look in the direction of what I am attending, or in the direction of memory; those are the two ends. Nothing can be outside of these. Although this sense of self feels inaccessible directly, it's always there, and none of this pertains to it; it has to be within this. It cannot be outside of it because all I have is 'this, and this'. Even the thought 'outside' of this experience, and the external world; is within 'this, and this'; within the attending it and having the memory of it.

"Sir, are these the five assumed aggregates: form, feeling, perception, intentions, and consciousness?"

"Yes, they are," replied the Buddha.

The mendicant approved and agreed with what the Buddha said. Then he asked another question: "But sir, what is the root of these five assumed aggregates?"

"These five assumed aggregates are rooted in desire."

"But sir, is that assumption the same thing as the five assumed aggregates? Or is the assumption one thing and the five assumed aggregates another?"

"Neither. Rather, the desire and greed for them is the assumption there." - [Mn109](#)

Two Directions, two points of view - concurrent attention.

Q: That's all that appears - 'with this, this is'.

Nm: And a lot more appears in between- but not outside of it. When I say 'in between', I don't mean in a third place between the two. I mean, based on these two simultaneous directions. That's why the Buddha described Namarupa Vinnana, Vinnana

Namarupa. They mutually determine each other. Neither comes before the other. They are two sheaves of reeds leaning on each other equally. They cannot remain standing if one is removed.

"Just as two sheaves of reeds might stand leaning against each other, so too, with name-and-form as condition, consciousness comes to be; with consciousness as condition, name-and-form comes to be. With name-and-form as condition, the six sense bases come to be; with the six sense bases as condition, contact.... Such is the perpetuation of this whole mass of suffering.

"If, friend, one were to remove one of those sheaves of reeds, the other would fall, and if one were to remove the other sheaf, the first would fall. So too, with the cessation of name-and-form comes the cessation of consciousness; with the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-and-form. With the cessation of name-and-form comes the cessation of the six sense bases; with the cessation of the six sense bases, cessation of contact.... Such is the ending of this whole mass of suffering." - [Sn12.67](#)

Q: It might be useful to mention two common wrong views to illustrate what you mean by these two directions, for example, empiricism and idealism.

Nm: Both imply that one direction comes first. Materialism, empiricism, and the scientific view are based on the assumption that 'what is attended to [through the senses]' comes first. Then you can have solipsism, idealism, or all sorts of variations that are based on the assumption that 'the mind' comes first. The Buddha discovered that they are simultaneous to the same extent. That is paticcasamuppada in a nutshell: 'With this, this is'; 'Without this, this wouldn't be'. That's it.

The Arahant does not destroy these two things to become an Arhant. He just removes any traces of ignorance regarding it. Practically (as opposed to theoretically), there is what you are currently attending to, for example, 'the seated body here and now'; and 'the thought about the seated body here and now'. I can have a memory of that 'here and now', I can have a memory of what that 'here and now' was yesterday, two, days ago, etc... And by withdrawing and expanding my mind from the senses, I could have a memory past this life. The point is, it's still within the same two points of view that are simultaneously present.

These two points of view are all you ever have, it's just that there are wrong views about what comes first; and everything else in between. That generally results in the weight of this experience being put on the sense of self as the owner- outside of this: The sense of self can remember, the sense of self can attend, the sense of self can do both, and look in between. But then you realize that that sense of self, as ambiguous as it is, is still an arisen phenomenon that you can have a memory of. It's actually an object. Not an object that you can direct your attention to, but in its own regard, it's a thing as such that exists in your mind. Thus, you are not it.

Now you can *say* there's no sense of self, but there is a sense of self. You just need to stop putting it first. Find that upon which it depends. And see your experience as fundamentally determined simultaneously by two points of view at once: One of memory, and one of direct attention. It means neither of them can be the center or master of the experience. When there are two, there cannot be one owner. Any notion of the external world, any notion of scientific observation; has to be within these two points of view. Any notion of a solipsistic world where 'I' is first; has to be within these two points of view - Paticcasamuppada.

"Name-and-form is not created by oneself, nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously, being created neither by oneself nor by another; but rather, with consciousness as condition, name-and-form comes to be."

"How is it, friend Sāriputta: Is consciousness created by oneself, or is it created by another, or is it created both by oneself and by another, or has it arisen fortuitously, being created neither by oneself nor by another?"

“Consciousness, friend Kōṭṭhita, is not created by oneself, nor is it created by another, nor is it created both by oneself and by another, nor has it arisen fortuitously, being created neither by oneself nor by another; but rather, with name-and-form as condition, consciousness comes to be.” - [Sn12.67](#)

*“Then the wanderer Vacchagotta approached the Blessed One ... and said to him:
“How is it now, Master Gotama, is there a self?”*

When this was said, the Blessed One was silent.

“Then, Master Gotama, is there no self?”

A second time the Blessed One was silent.

Then the wanderer Vacchagotta rose from his seat and departed.

Then, not long after the wanderer Vacchagotta had left, the Venerable Ānanda said to the Blessed One: “Why is it, venerable sir, that when the Blessed One was questioned by the wanderer Vacchagotta, he did not answer?”

“If, Ānanda, when I was asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta, ‘Is there a self?’ I had answered, ‘There is a self,’ this would have been siding with those ascetics and brahmins who are eternalists. And if, when I was asked by him, ‘Is there no self?’ I had answered, ‘There is no self,’ this would have been siding with those ascetics and brahmins who are annihilationists.

“If, Ānanda, when I was asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta, ‘Is there a self?’ I had answered, ‘There is a self,’ would this have been consistent on my part with the arising of the knowledge that ‘all phenomena are nonself?’”

“No, venerable sir.”

“And if, when I was asked by him, ‘Is there no self?’ I had answered, ‘There is no self,’ the wanderer Vacchagotta, already confused, would have fallen into even greater confusion, thinking, ‘It seems that the self I formerly had does not exist now.’” - [Sn44.10](#)

Often, when people asked the Buddha about the sense of self; saying that ‘Master Gotama says there is no self [implying that non-self is a self]’ or any other mysticism; he would just be silent. However, on some other occasions, people did ask him the same question and he replied- but not to their question. He would say ‘with this, this is’, ‘with Vinnana, Namarupa; with Namarupa, Vinnana’. Why would he give that answer to ‘where is my sense of self?’. Then you realize that it’s because that is where the sense of self is.

Fully understanding ‘with this, this is’. Understanding that there is no ‘outside’ of these two directions. There is then the abandoning of the sense of self when you see that it is always undermined by the other direction. That’s the most direct answer for how to develop ‘not self’.

The Buddha could describe ‘with this, this is’ (paticcasamuppada) in many different subtle details. But fundamentally, all you need to contemplate is the principle ‘with this, this is’ on the right level.

With what, what is? With this- that which I'm directly attending to (my experience as a whole); and with this- the image of the experience as a whole- the memory of it simultaneously present. If that image-memory was not there, you wouldn't know the experience as a whole, as the experience you are attending to. These two points of view are simultaneous/concurrent: One feeds the other, one defines the other. If there are no senses that are attending and operating in their own domain, there would be nothing to have an image of. If there is no image, recollection, or memory of the senses and the world that the senses are in; nothing would be intelligible. You would not be a conscious being.

So what then is the practice?

Whatever happens throughout the day- make sure that you don't forget the context of 'with this, this is'.

Whether you're recollecting birth or death, or Namarupa Vinnana; the principle of 'with this, this is'; the principle of two simultaneously present things and everything else in between; always remains the same. The monk who establishes that rightly, doesn't take 'I' to be first (to be his own), or forms in the world, or mental objects. Everything else in between- the feelings arising on account of perceptions, and all of the other experiences in between this relationship- he then equally won't take as his.

If you make the effort to not ignore this right order, then whatever you're experiencing- based on sense restraint, virtue and solitude, you include in the order 'with this, this is'- there is no outside of it. It doesn't matter if it's more on the mental memory side or more on the palpable side; that's why we keep saying the content doesn't matter. The nature of things matters. It's present as such. Whichever way it feels, it's got to be felt within 'with this, this is'- not outside of it.

And when I think 'outside of it', that's within the enduring body here, and the memory of the enduring body here. It's still enclosed within the same principle. The moment you hammer that in, whereby you cannot forget that there is no outside of 'with this, this is'- that's where your attavada is gone. You continue to operate externally. You might still look the same. But your assumption of external to 'with this, this is' is now inconceivable- because it is inconceivable. 'Conceiving' is seen within it. Because you have developed the perspective of 'with this, this is' sufficiently enough to include the wildest of your careless fantasies, imaginations, assumptions... It's still seen rightly, as second- within it.

Now if you sustain, invest effort, purify, establish, and endure that view; there will be no room for the slightest traces of conceit to remain. You might have abandoned the view of the external entity of 'me' existing independent of it, but there will still be subtler habits, leanings, and cravings implying independence (between 'this' and 'this'). You might think 'it's still within "this and this" but it's a bit independent'. Then you realize even *that* cannot stand outside these two directions. If the principle of paticcasamuppada is thoroughly developed, dhamma is fulfilled. That's why the suttas say 'one who sees paticcasamuppada, sees the dhamma'. There's no delay there. It's the right view that, if you cultivate it, can only result in the direct purification of your being. Removal and cessation of passion, greed, aversion, and delusion. Because all of those things imply a degree of that conceit, self-centeredness, and craving. But none of that can stand if this right view is hammered in.

"Now this has been said by the Blessed One: "One who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma; one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent origination." And these five aggregates affected by assumption are dependently arisen. The desire, indulgence, inclination, and holding based on these five aggregates affected by assumption is the origin of suffering. The removal of desire and lust, the abandonment of desire and lust for these five aggregates affected by assumption is the cessation of suffering.' At that point too, friends, much has been done by that bhikkhu." - [Mn.28](#)

Beyond right view

Q: Could it be correct to say that the removal of attavada is to see that view of paticcasamuppada rightly- as you described? And then you don't need the view anymore. You can't even have that pure view anymore if that conceit is removed because you would *be* it. In the sense that paticcasamuppada is what you are.

Nm: Yes. For an Arahant, because there are no more traces of conceit left, he doesn't need to recollect and re-establish that view- because there's nothing perverting it. The suttas say that 'the Arahant has gone beyond the view'. Which means, even the right view is gone. He doesn't have it anymore because he has no wrong reference regarding it anymore- to define it.

Q: Whereas someone who sees that has another reference point.

Nm: And he can fall back onto the fetters that he hasn't abandoned. He can't fall back beyond that. So a sotapanna can abandon his training, become careless, and not invest more effort into sustaining and purifying this view that he has; but he cannot spill outside with his assumptions of attavada, the external 'self', or the 'over there'. That's inconceivable because, even when the mind has those thoughts, they're seen in the background of the memory of 'with this, this is'.

Q: And that's effortless. It's just seen like that. It cannot *not* be seen like that.

Nm: Exactly. The effort is on the level of acting out of the habits, pressures, and passions. Including trying to get rid of it directly, through all sorts of practices. That's the effort. But the view in itself requires no effort.

Q: Because it's not like a view that you hold.

Nm: Well, in a way, any view is effortless. Worldly views are effortless. That's why they're so hard to uproot. You don't even see how you're doing them, because you're not doing them directly.

Q: So, whether it's effortless or not, is not what makes the difference.

Nm: What makes the difference is whether it's right or wrong. Whether it's contradicting the order of things, the arrangement of the aggregates, the experience as a whole, etc... or not. Whether it's aligned with the order of things, the arrangement of the aggregates, etc. That's why the term 'dhamma' is used interchangeably as phenomena and the knowledge of 'the way out'.

Q: It's still a phenomenon in both cases.

Nm: It's a phenomenon, yes. It's just rightly established, the right order of phenomena, and the wrong order of phenomena. There is no third option. If the right order of phenomena is established 'with this, this is', dispassion will have to be an inevitable result. Like the simile of the river sloping down the mountain- the water has to go that way because that's where the mountain slopes. If your slope is established upon the right order, the mind will have to slope towards nibbana, dispassion, cooling down, removal of ownership, and any traces of ownership of atta.

The moment you start seeing 'the self' (that ambiguous phenomenon we started describing) as 'an ambiguous phenomenon that endures there peripherally'- that's already the beginning of relinquishing the ownership of it. That's why I keep saying that *you* don't remove the attavada- you remove the ownership of it. Because it's neither here nor there- but it's known to be between the two. Thus, atta becomes an-atta. But the thing is there. The creature or individual- whatever you want to call it- is still there. That ambiguous sense of self of these 5 aggregates, of these memories, future plans, and everything else remains there; it's just impossible to own.

Q: Perhaps it's necessary to emphasize that it's '*direction*'; you can never access an endpoint to the direction.

Nm: Even if you're not necessarily thinking about either direction, you realize that you are within the two. Your non-thinking, your distraction, is within 'with this, this is'. It's within: What's presently attended to, and the memory of it- even if it is presently unattended to in unawareness.

Q: What do you think about defining 'with this, this is' in terms of 'the direction of what is attended to' and 'the direction of where attention is coming from'?

Nm: Exactly. That's what *yoniso* is. The womb of what you're looking at. They are simultaneously present as 'with this, this is'. So what you're looking at, or touching, etc... it's there where that image is. It's not in you: 'In me' it's 'there' where that image is. So, it's just outside and more outside (internally speaking).

Q: Inaccessible.

Nm: Yes, inaccessible. That's why the description of an Arahant says 'all that's left is this conscious body, and name-and-form externally'. Because he has completely abandoned everything that needed to be abandoned on account of seeing the principle of 'with this, this is'. The more you practice these two internal points of view (attention and present memory); the more external the whole thing becomes. They are becoming two external points of view, and thus there is nothing 'in me'.

"When a bhikkhu has no I-making, mine-making, and underlying tendency to conceit regarding this conscious body; and in regard to all name-and-form externally; and when he enters and dwells in that liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, through which there is no more I-making, mine-making, and underlying tendency to conceit for one who enters and dwells in it, he is called a bhikkhu who has cut off craving, stripped off the fetter, and, by completely breaking through conceit, has made an end of suffering" - [An3.33](#)

The image 'in me' is already external to my own sense of self. The sense of self is external to itself thus it's not mine. That's why it's a bit ambiguous in the suttas between the usage of 'internal' and 'external'. Sometimes 'internal' basically stands for 'mine' - because that's where 'mine' is. Here, you will start internally, stop assuming the external world, and in the end; that 'internal' non-assumption of the external world is seen as a thing 'out there' - with purification from attavada. That's like the body there 'to the extent necessary'. The image of the body, the memory of the body there, understood as 'body there', to the extent necessary for the final knowledge and the final uprooting of passion.

There's nothing mystical about it. You can have a memory from ten years ago, ten days ago, or you can have a memory of what you're doing right now. The image of it is the memory of it. Simultaneously present, enduring, giving the context to what you're attending. But you need to stop putting yourself first, as the one who remembers, and start seeing yourself as an enduring thing; within that memory, and the world that is directly attended to (the senses and the objects of your attention).

The mind and the five senses; *that's* the experience as a whole. 'With this, this is', and any notion of self, ownership, consciousness, feelings, decisions, past and future plans, griefs, joys... it's all within these two, utterly inaccessible directions. They are just two sheaves of reeds holding each other. Everything dear to me or not dear to me is just gratuitously sitting there on top of these, i.e., it cannot be mine.

Remembering the right order

The practice of sati is the practice of memory, for example, of your present body posture. *Memory*- not direct attention. Have a memory of your presently enduring body posture. Have a memory of your presently enduring feeling. Have a memory of your presently enduring thoughts. Again, the memory of it. So emphasize the memory point of view, not the directly attending point of view. That's how the signs of the mind will become apparent. That's how the shape of the ambiguous state of mind and sense of self is going to be discerned.

Q: That memory is uprooting atta. In the sense that no matter what choices 'I' make, 'I' have to be within 'with this, this is'.

Nm: Exactly. It resets the right order. Then when you inevitably have the thought that took you away from the principle of 'with this, this is', you don't negate it, or try to get rid of it, stop thinking, focus... No, you have a memory of having it right here and now- because it is here and now. You do that long enough and the fact that it's inconceivable for it to be outside of 'with this, this is', will become established. There is no going back from there.

Even if you then stop recollecting the two directions, a sotapanna's knowledge cannot be undone- that it cannot be outside of these directions. I can ignore this knowledge because I'm too occupied with the world or family. It doesn't matter- the knowledge that it cannot be outside of 'with this, this is' is still there. The gratuitous assumption of a self, living there independently (an owner)- and the entire mass of suffering that is dependent on that deeply rooted perversion- is gone. That's why there is no 'second arrow' hitting an Ariya Savaka as the suttas describe. Because that deeply perverted order, that projected you out there into even worse circumstances than you already are in, is gone.

Craving is bad, the conceit is bad but not as bad as the wrong view of attavada. Not as bad as the level of perversion that ignores 'with this, this is'. The more you pervert this order, the more you own the self. Which means, the heavier it is. Which means, losing it is going to be far worse. Somebody with only traces of conceit; if they were to lose their life, health, or things that were dear to them; won't suffer. As a sotapanna, you would have seven grains of sand of suffering left, in comparison to the Himalayas that were destroyed by getting the right view and ceasing to assume outside of yourself.

Q: Because you know the escape.

Nm: Yes, and factually the burden- to a great degree- has been made inconceivable. That's also why the right view (freeing yourself of the assumption of self) surpasses all assumptions (upadanas). Because attavada is on the level of 'with this, this is'. The upadana (or assumption) of 'virtue and duty' (silabatta parāmāsa), sensuality (kama), and all of the other wrong views, are not on the level of 'with this, this is'. All views are contained within 'with this, this is'. Somebody who has understood it is a sotapanna- is free from attavada- even though they might not be free from sensuality, ill will, and all of the other things that are in between.

The Earth element

Q: Can we explore this [discourse](#) where the Buddha talks to Rahula about these five elements? He starts talking first about the earth element; then he mentions hair of the head, hair of the body, skin, teeth... Then he says, 'that which is internally clung to or held as mine' is undermined by the fact that 'internal earth element' and 'external earth element' both are earth element. Can we also contemplate that sutta by discerning that you cannot just have internal earth element, you cannot just have external earth element: You need to have both, for any of this to be- for all elements.

Nm: Yes. And that could also stand for the principle of 'with this, this is'. It's not on the level of directly attending to earth and staring at a piece of soil. It's recollecting the great earth. Have a memory of what you are already in: 'Be like earth'- recall the properties of the earth that's currently enduring.

Earth is not elsewhere while we talk and forget about it. You are on earth. Factually it's there, it endures as the basis for your experience. What are the properties of that 'external' earth? Can this 'internal' earth that I'm paired with control any properties outside the properties of the earth- that are different from it? That would not be affected if the great earth is affected? That's inconceivable.

Sustain that image; 'with this, this is'- there will be no room for the ownership to remain there clinging to this part or that part. You won't be able to assume 'I'm not this body but I am the universe'. Which universe? The one that changes against your will all the time- forcefully, violently, disrupts, erupts, gets destroyed? Look at those mountains- they come to destruction eventually. What is to be said of this tiny fickle body, in relation to the size of them- that's equally unpredictable? 'With this, this is'. The properties of this, cannot not be the properties of this inferior thing. That's the practice of kasinas in a nutshell. The elements of earth, fire, water, air, space, consciousness...

The Buddha would describe a Brahmin establishing his mind on the level of that great earth. Anything inferior to that cannot perturb him. If you're always thinking about the presently enduring earth, while you're here on it, you'll probably develop the contemporary *eco-anxiety*- worrying about what will happen to the earth. Even if it's not ecology related, you're going to have anxiety if you're not relinquishing your sense of self. If you don't know what comes first and what to look for. Because you realize that all of your life's concerns, joys, possessions, future, past... presuppose this enduring planet of earth. You are bound

with this great lump of soil that is simultaneously present; as an uncontrollable, unownable basis for experience. Now, if your mind is established on that level, i.e. it has relinquished the ownership of everything inferior to the earth; any changes inferior to the earth changing could not bother you.

However, those Brahmins that could factually establish their minds in the right order, on the right level, and to the right extent; did not know the gratification, danger, and escape regarding that great earth. The Tathāgata knows it, and that's why he's free in both regards. Those Brahmins, outside of the Buddha's dispensation, who developed the mind on the level of the earth, had to some extent put it first. They did not see 'with this, this is': They did not see that their memory, knowledge, image, or recollection of the earth; wouldn't be possible if it weren't for 'this, here immediate earth'. They went too far this side or too far on the other side. They saw a certain relationship of surmounting, but they didn't see that that great earth is defined, as such, on account of this little body. That's why the entire universe is within this body. That is the measure of the universe, and the universe then defines this body. So 'with this, this is'.

The same goes for somebody concerned with this inferior earth as an internal 'me', or 'my body'. You can cultivate and apply the properties of that great earth to it; that is unbothered by people throwing stuff on it, digging it, and destroying it. These things make no difference to the great earth. Apply those same properties to this internal body- because it is the same element- and you will see that it's your ownership that created that gratuitous division of 'mine'; 'internal' and 'external' etc...
